

Portfolio Notes

How can the tapping of potential leaders become a continuous and a routine aspect of leaders' behavior?

Kouzes and Posner maintain that a good leader has a shared vision, and knows how to motivate one's constituents to share the dreams that the leader envisions. Their five fundamental practices of leadership are:

- Challenge the process
- Inspire a shared vision
- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Encourage the heart

Leadership, Kouzes and Posner state, is a dialogue, not a monologue. Basically, an influential leader, whether in business or in education, has the power to unite a working community around a common vision and promote collaboration and innovation among all participants within the organization. If good school leadership were common, this country's schools would be vigorous learning communities. All of the research points to rich, guided experience when learning the art and craft of good leadership. As Sarason stated: "don't tinker in the margins." Preparing school leaders must be centered on rigorous experience that is supported by understanding and being fluent in the current thinking and writing in their field. Those leaders/potential leaders who do not believe it is important to access and use research, as well as respect the research, need to be bid a fond farewell, with the proper exit standards in place to assist them in finding their niche in society. The ability to do this, is, in itself, the demonstration of a leadership behavior- a very important one that is often ignored or not exercised.

Portfolio is a measure that: (a) supports and facilitates program expectations about learning and competence, (b) helps students self-assess as they progress, and (c) engages students more fundamentally in their own learning.

Types and Purposes of Portfolios

"A purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress or achievement" and "must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines for selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-reflection" (Arter & Spandel, 1992, p.36).

As an assessment tool the portfolio provides a place where a student can present current levels of accomplishment through artifacts, providing evidence that represents performance in prescribed areas and tasks. These artifacts can be viewed, reviewed, and rated by teachers, peers, and others, based on established or emerging criteria or well-developed rubrics (Gibson & Barrett, 2002). According to Forster and Masters, 1996, p.2) "the more relevant the evidence, the more useful it is for inferring a student's level of achievement in a learning area".

Hewitt (2004) states that three basic types are favored:

1. A documentation portfolio shows growth relative to specified outcomes, serving as a diagnostic tool for assessing a student's mastery of required knowledge and skills.

2. A process portfolio verifies various phases of the learning process as a student progresses toward mastery, encouraging metacognitive awareness through written reflections about learning, the artifacts that represent it, and the challenges that the student faced or continues to face.

3. A showcase portfolio displays a student's best works and reflections on how these works were selected for the portfolio, what the selections represent, and what accomplishment and abilities the display supports.

Portfolios have at least 2 primary purposes: formative and summative assessment. Formative focuses on the development. As formative assessment tools, portfolios can show a student's growth over time by including goal-setting activities at the onset and the requiring periodic reflections on subsequent growth activities and progress toward those goals. HAVING BOTH STUDENT AND FACULTY CONTRIBUTE THEIR REFLECTIONS PROVIDES A MULTIPERSPECTIVE APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENTS.

Summative portfolios, on the other hand, substantiate the attainment of learning outcomes for certification purposes. A summative portfolio "requires the specification of standards and contents' (Klenowski, 2002, p.II) that support formal assessment. As high-stakes measures, summative portfolios can require critical attention to reliability of both content and process. However, they can be problematic in doctoral programs where available expertise and time are always in short supply.

Benefits of Portfolios

- a. They support the full inclusion of students in their own learning.
- b. They support not only the apprenticeship model of instruction but also encourage collegiality and power sharing among students and their mentors.
- c. They engage student and mentor in setting particular criteria for successful completion of a program through student-instructor

collaborative design, based on program wide standards and performance expectations.

- d. When appropriately designed, they align clearly with the principles of effective assessment by providing frequent and effective feedback to students, thus being educative as well as evaluative.

Each of these rationales advances ascending notions of constructivism and collaborative learning that now push faculty in higher education to use learning-outcome data to improve program practices. Most obvious among the curricular benefits of portfolios-as an instructional activity and assessment methodology-are that they promote student engagement, encourage faculty consensus on program and course purposes (e.g., goals and outcomes), facilitate the specifications of assessment criteria, provide opportunities for addressing validity and reliability issues, and furnish tangible evidence of growth through both student and faculty reflections on products and processes.

Student Engagement

Portfolios provide a means to both strengthen the mentor-mentee relationship and provide the student and the doctoral program with clear student-performance data, and are also a benefit for meeting accreditation requirements. Wiggins states:

If our aim is to improve student performance; not just measure it, we must ensure that students know the performances expected of them, the standards against which they will be judged, and have opportunities to learn from the assessment in future assessments. (2004)

Program Goals and Learning Outcome Statements

Assessment Criteria

Effective assessments must be

1. Systematic- a methodical and open process of acquiring evidence about abilities and achievement over time
2. Cumulative- a body of evidence collected over time that can be used in increasingly sophisticated ways to improve educational programs
3. Multifaceted/multidimensional- a selection of multiple dimensions using multiple methods and multiple sources to reflect the complexity of human and organizational behavior
4. Pragmatic-a collection and analysis of data useful to improving the educational environment, both for teaching and for learning.

Validity and Reliability

Validity issues pertain to having clear and accepted purposes for the portfolio, guidelines for selecting materials for the portfolio, and relevant performance criteria for evaluating the quality of the artifacts. Specifying all of this clearly and effectively requires coordination among those involved in the implementation of the system. Reliability means that portfolio evaluations are consistent among raters yet manageable.

Validity and reliability principles that are transferable for practitioners in higher education include the following:

1. The purpose, criteria for performance, and products included as evidence in a portfolio need to be very clear to both students and instructors (Wiggins, 1998).
2. The important decisions about students' competence, promotion, and graduation should be based on collections of "convincing work" that represent intellectual performance genres" (Wiggins, 1998,p197).
3. Training for instructors is essential to the reliability of portfolio assessments (Mills, 1989),
4. Portfolio assessment can be effective for evaluating student growth if the portfolio process and assessment system are valid (Koretz et al., 1992; Krusekopf & Karr-Kidwell, 2003).
5. The work required as evidence must be meaningful to the students (Baker, Gearhart, Herman, Tierney, & Whittaker, 1991; Gearhart, Herman, Baker, & Whittker, n.d.).
6. Well-structured opportunities for self-reflection need to be available (Wolf, 1989).

Implications of Portfolios for Doctoral Education

The faculty-student collaboration required by a doctoral portfolio process encourages and supports such mentoring as a student becomes an "equal partner in every aspect of the design, implementation, interpretation, and resulting actions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.11) of graduate training. In addition, a well-designed portfolio process specifies expectations for doctoral students that are transparent to them (Nyquist and Woodford, 2000), including selection criteria, progress expectations, and assessment methods as well as data on time to degree, completion rates, and placement success (Council of Graduate Schools, 2004; Denecke & Slimowitz, 2004)